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**Gov. Perdue Secures Federal Disaster Declaration for Tornado
Ravaged Counties; State Continues Aggressive Recovery Efforts**
Number of Victims Revised to 24 Dead

RALEIGH – Gov. Bev Perdue last night received a federal disaster declaration from President Obama for 10 of the counties affected by Saturday's tornadoes and severe storms. The other eight counties that were damaged are expected to be added later once preliminary damage assessments are completed.

Overnight, the death toll from the storms rose as another victim in Bertie County was confirmed. This puts the official number of dead at 24, with 14 of those in Bertie County alone.

Governor Perdue gave an update of state and federal efforts during a press conference in downtown Raleigh this morning [note to press: the press conference will be available online soon.]. She reported the following updates from emergency assessments taking place around the state:

- 133 injuries;
- 439 homes confirmed destroyed, with that number expected to rise;
- 6,189 homes with some level of damage (5,000 reported in Wake County alone);
- 21 businesses destroyed, likely more to come;
- 92 businesses damaged, with that number expected to rise;
- 2,000 employees confirmed out of work because their place of business was destroyed or damaged (1,000 of those employees are at Static Control in Lee County, which was demolished) and that number is considered a low early estimate.

The federal declaration makes available low-interest loans or grants to storm victims to help them repair their homes and businesses in Bertie, Bladen, Cumberland, Halifax, Harnett, Johnston, Lee, Onslow, Wake, and Wilson counties. Residents and business owners in the declared counties can apply for low-interest federal loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration in the following amounts:

- Homeowners – up to \$240,000 to repair or replace their homes and some personal belongings
- Renters – up to \$40,000 to replace personal belongings
- Business Owners – up to \$2 million for business property losses